

**South Precinct Email Community Newsletter**  
**November 18, 2008**



Dear Community Friends,

### **Car Prowls**

Yeah, yeah, I know - you're tired of seeing this subject. Trust me, I'm tired of writing about it. The sad reality is that we've seen a marked increase in the number of car prowls throughout the Precinct in recent months compared to this time last year.

#### **Why The Increase?**

We have some theories:

- *Car prowlers are hard to catch in the act.* While they occur all times of the day and night in every neighborhood, most occur during hours of darkness in areas that do not have a lot of foot or vehicle traffic at the time of the crime.
- *Car prowls take less time to commit than other crimes.* It literally takes seconds for the prowler to see if there's anything in the car that attracts their attention and a few more seconds to open the unlocked door or break the window to get in, get the stuff and get away.
- *Car Prowls are treated as misdemeanors.* As car prowls are theft from a car, the crime is prosecuted as a theft, regardless of the damage done to the car in the commission of the crime. Even if an offender is caught and prosecuted, the crime is almost always prosecuted as a misdemeanor offense. That differs from burglary, which is a felony offense.
- *Car prowls are lucrative.* Consider this:
  - Items most often taken in car prowls: Laptops, iPods, cash, small electronics, wallets, weapons, IDs, GPS systems.
  - Items most often taken in burglaries: Laptops, iPods, cash, small electronics, wallets, weapons, IDs, jewelry.

Say I'm a bad guy. If I break in to a car and get caught, I'm charged with a misdemeanor. So, why would I break in to a home and risk getting caught and charged with a felony when my take from the car is about what I'd get from the house? Just because I'm a criminal doesn't mean I'm stupid.

#### **Who's Doing It?**

*There is no one group of people committing car prowls.* They are youth who are taking a break from burglarizing homes. They are addicts looking for an easy score they can turn into quick cash for their next fix. They are transients walking through the area. They are adults. They are young people. Most of all, they are opportunists.

#### **What Can Be Done?**

Car Prowl is a prolific problem. There are things we as owners and operators of vehicles can do to prevent these crimes.

- Don't leave items of value in your vehicle. You've seen us write this before and we say it at every community meeting. It bears repeating because we're still seeing this behavior; items of value in a vehicle create an opportunity for the offender to exploit.
- We see reports of people who park along the lake to go walking but leave their wallets in the car. If you're going to take a walk or run along the lake, take your wallet with you rather than leaving it in the car.
- If you *are* going to leave something in your car, don't wait until you park at your destination before you put stuff in the trunk or under the seat. You've just shown anyone who's around that you've just put stuff in your trunk or under the seat.
- Don't leave accessories visible in your car. You may have taken the Laptop or iPod in with you, but if you leave the USB cables for your laptop or earbuds for the iPod in the back seat, the offender may think those items are in the car and break in anyway.

- GPS systems are being taken at an alarming rate. Think about how the GPS is mounted in your car. If the mounting for the GPS is visible, the thief may think the GPS is in the glove box or under the seat and may break in to try to get it. Have a removable mounting for the GPS and put that out of sight as well.

In Problem Oriented Policing, there is the concept of the Crime Triangle. This concept basically says for criminal activity to occur, three elements need to be present: an offender, a target or victim and a place. If any one of these elements is altered or impacted, the criminal activity is impacted. If one of these elements is missing, a crime cannot occur. In our next edition, we will spend some time talking about Problem Solving and how we positively impact the elements of the triangle



Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!  
Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator